



研究成果を英語で伝えるスキルに磨きをかけたい皆さんへ：このシリーズでは、東京大学のウッドワード先生が、あなたの今の英語能力を使って成果をより効果的に上手に伝えるためのアイデア、作戦、ヒントを紹介します。また、日本語でのプレゼンにも役立つ多くのアイディアも見つかるでしょう。

By Invitation of the Editor-in-Chief

English Scientific Communication Part 10—After the presentation

Jonathan R. WOODWARD

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo



This is the tenth article in an ongoing series about preparing and delivering scientific presentations in English. Previous articles have looked at concepts and strategies for preparing and delivering effective and memorable presentations and last month we reached the end of the lecture and looked at strategies for answering questions from the audience. In this month's article we move on to think about what happens after the presentation is over.

Time to breathe out and relax?

So finally, the chairman asks, “Are there any more questions? If not, then let's thank the speaker again,” the audience applauds and you can finally sit down and relax. But should you?

In many cases, after the efforts and stress of giving a presentation, all we want to do is sit down and forget about it. However, if you are prepared to wait just a little longer before considering the job done, it can benefit you greatly in the future. Everything that is clear in your mind right now will be forgotten within a few hours, so it is worth taking the opportunity to provide yourself with some help for your next presentation.

The first step is to return to your seat and then spend a few minutes reflecting on the presentation. In the world of edu-

cation, “reflective practice” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reflective_practice) is viewed as an important part of being a good teacher and is considered a very effective way to learn and improve. The principle is that simply doing something does not necessarily lead you to learn how to do it better. Instead, much greater improvement can come from active and considered reflection after an activity. You should work back through the presentation and think about the things you think you did well and the things that were not so effective (it is worth making lists in a notebook). For the things that went well—why were they effective? Can you learn something that can be used to make other aspects of the presentation better? For the things that went wrong or were not as effective as you had hoped, why do you think this was the case? What can you do to improve next time? Make a note of your thoughts and try to make a bullet point list of things to remember and think about when you are preparing next time.

It is definitely worth keeping a separate notebook (paper or electronic) for your presentation reflections. Take it with you whenever you deliver a presentation and keep your thoughts carefully recorded with the date and details of the presentation. Not only will this form a

useful list of all the presentations you deliver (you may need to have such a list for your CV) but having all your collected thoughts and experiences in one place is very helpful when you start preparing your next presentation. One of the most important aspects of reflective practice is to be honest. You may feel uncomfortable admitting some of your mistakes or weaknesses right now, but when you are writing your next presentation you will be very pleased to have the advice waiting for you. In our minds, we tend to block out things that we are unhappy or embarrassed about and sometimes the only time we remember is when it happens again—unless we write it down.

You probably also have some questions. There will be aspects of the presentation where you would like to know what the audience thought as you were unable to tell from their reaction. The best way to get answers to your questions is to ask them!

Get some feedback

The next step is to try and get some opinions on your presentations from others. It is likely that if your advisor / supervisor / boss was watching the presentation, that they will have some comments they would like to share with you. It is important to pay careful attention to

these comments (write them in your presentation reflection notebook). Make sure to ask follow up questions so that you completely understand where you need to make changes and write down what you need to do to fix any problems. In addition, make sure to ask your own questions. Your advisor is likely to give you comments mostly on the content of your presentation, but you should make sure to ask questions about the way in which you delivered it. Was your English clear enough? Were there problems with your pronunciation, or volume, or speed of delivery? Did you have any distracting nervous gestures or struggle to make eye contact? Think of all the aspects of delivering the presentation and try to get as much feedback as possible. Although it may sometimes be uncomfortable to hear criticism, listening to and accepting it is also the way to get better more quickly. Ignore it and you will keep making the same mistakes.

The situation will be different every time you give a presentation, but you should try to get feedback from as many sources as possible. Ask your other colleagues about the presentation. Don't simply ask, "Was it ok?" as such a general question will almost always only elicit a very general answer, usually, "It was fine." Instead ask very specific questions to those people whose opinion you value or those you think may be able to offer some help or insight. In particular, if you can find any native English speakers that can give you some feedback on the clarity of your presentation, their suggestions may be particularly effective.

After collecting feedback, you should make sure to engage in another session of self-reflection. Were the comments what you were expecting? Do they fit in with your own feelings about the presentation? Where there are big differences between how you thought the

presentation went and what audience members thought, you should focus carefully as there are often things that we do that we are unaware of. Taking into account your own reflections and your feedback from others, you should try to identify the key points to think about when preparing for your next presentation. If you make the effort and do this properly now, you will be so very happy with yourself when you start preparing for next time and open your notebook to find clear advice.

What happens next?

Unless you are the last speaker at the conference, there is a good chance that you will have the opportunity to watch more presentations. With your own presentation fresh in your mind and your list of areas to improve newly prepared, there is no better time than now to turn a critical eye to other presentations to look for ideas. If possible, when you are in a lecture where the content is not of direct interest to you, use it as an opportunity to examine the technique of the presenter. How do they introduce themselves? What are their presentation slides like? How is their body language? Can you understand their English clearly? If not, why not? How is their pacing and tone? Can you follow their explanations? Do they finish on time? Early? Late? How do they approach answering the questions?

There are two main reasons for doing this. The first is that watching other presenters can give you good ideas to use in your own presentations. In particular, try to watch experienced presenters and see what techniques they use to control their nerves, keep the audience's attention etc. Watching less experienced presenters can also be useful, however, because if a presentation is not very effective, you can begin to understand where the problems came from. The second reason is more important. Your goal is to become an effective critic of

presentations. The more presentations you watch and analyze carefully, the more you will be effective at critically assessing your own lectures and performances. When reflecting on a presentation, you will have a clearer idea of what you did well and what you did less well. Developing a critical eye is important and once you do so, you will always see things differently than you did before. However, just as reflecting on your own presentations can help you improve much more quickly than simply delivering the presentation, simply watching lots of presentations will not give you a critical eye. You need to watch lectures in a very active way and have particular questions to answer. Sometimes you might want to focus on simply watching a presenter's gestures. Another time you might be focused on the contents and layout of their slides. The more you do this, the sharper your critical eye will become and this will translate into noticeable improvements in your own presentations. You do not have to limit this behavior to conferences. If you have classes, watch your teachers. In addition, YouTube and similar online video sites have made an almost limitless collection of presentations available that you can use to train yourself. You will find that you can develop a critical eye surprisingly quickly.

Finally relax

With your reflection done and your feedback written down, the lecture is now truly over and you can give yourself a pat on the back and relax. If you did a good job, don't be afraid to reward yourself. Also don't forget to use your critical eye when watching lectures by your colleagues and friends so that you can give them useful feedback too.

Next month we will move on to take a look at a few important tips and tricks that we can use in our presentations, to give them an extra edge.

© 2015 The Chemical Society of Japan